

ANNOUNCER: You have just heard WPA HEADLINES OF THE WEEK,
another in the series of weekly broadcasts devoted
to the work being done in your community. In this
brief sketch we endeavored to show how the ready
hand of the WPA is available in any emergency.
This sketch was written by Hughes Allison of the
New Jersey Writers' Project.
WPA HEADLINES OF THE WEEK will be presented again
at this same time next week.

OPENING ANNOUNCEMENT:

"WPA HEADLINES OF THE WEEK". Good _____
friends. This is another of YOUR personal programs, a
quarter hour devoted to news and information concerning
YOUR community.

Each week at this time you are informed as to what is
happening INSIDE WPA, and just how the work of this Federal
agency affects your community.

Here are your commentators _____
and _____.

1st man: Well, _____, the Defense Program is moving along with the swiftness of a bird on the wing, and believe me, that's no mere figure of speech either.

2nd man: Sounds like a story, _____. What's it about?

1st: Pigeons. Now don't look surprised, because those little creatures of the air may come to play an important part in the defense of these United States, should an attack upon us ever be attempted.

2nd: Let's hope an attack upon us never materializes. But I'm not at all surprised, now that I come to think of it, that you mention pigeons relative to the Defense Program. I take it, though, that their work will be connected with communications.

1st: Exactly. And that word-- communications-- is a large factor in our daily lives. But in warfare communications are absolutely vital.

2nd: Yes, an army has to keep informed as to what its various units are doing and where, when they're in the field.

1st: Naturally, the telephone, radio, plane and other mechanical devices will play their usual part in communications. But two years ago, according to Robert W. Allan, Administrator of the New Jersey Work Projects Administration, the WPA began doing its bit for the winged messengers so often used in warfare.

2nd: Say, two years is quite a lead for the WPA to have taken in aiding our present Defense Program.

1st: I know what you're thinking. The Defense Program was practically unheard of that far back. Yet, it was with a possible emergency in mind that the WPA built lofts for carrier pigeons at Fort Monmouth in New Jersey.

2nd: The United States Army has a Signal Corps stationed at Fort Monmouth, hasn't it?

1st: Right. And this branch of our Army's Signal Corps at Fort Monmouth spends a great deal of time breeding and training carrier pigeons.

2nd: You said a moment ago that the WPA had built lofts there for pigeons. I don't suppose you'd be divulging a military secret if you enlarged a bit upon this phase of the WPA's activity?

1st: Don't worry about my giving away military secrets. I won't! Yes, the WPA built those lofts after the draftsmen in the Signal Corps designed them. Incidentally, they're considered among the finest in the country.

2nd: Well! Chalk up another triumph for Jersey's WPA!

1st: Yes, I think it is a triumph! Anyway, the pigeon center at Fort Monmouth is composed of five buildings. One houses the administrative and workshop activities. The other four contain twenty lofts, each one accomodating twenty-five to thirty-five pigeons.

2nd: I don't suppose facilities for mating and breeding have been neglected either?

1st: Not in the least. Mating birds not only find nests prepared for them, but they have a connecting outdoor aviary where they can exercise. Proper lighting in the lofts is evident even at a glance. Ventilation is perfect.

2nd: Don't you give the birds any heat? You know winter in New Jersey can be very severe.

1st: Well, after noting the generous food rations and running water insuring a fresh drinking supply for our soldiers in feathers, I remarked about the absence of heating apparatus in the lofts myself.

2nd: Yes?

1st: My question was summed up in a one-word reply given me by
(Poc-tree)
Major C. A. Poutre who is in charge of the training center.

2nd: It'll have to be good! Or I'll write to the Audubon Society!

1st: Major Poutre's come-back would be: "Pneumonia!" You see, pigeons have to fly in all sorts of weather. To take them out of a hot lofe and subject them to an exhaustive flight in cold, rainy weather would probably mean taps for them.

2nd: Oh! Of course!

1st: And now listen to this: When a pigeon is one week old, the band that identifies it throughout its life is placed around its leg. That's because its feet grow so rapidly.

2nd: How old is a pigeon when it begins to train to carry messages?

1st: Four weeks old. And in the training at Fort Monmouth, the Signal Corps cooperates with private fanciers. Each week, thousands of birds from North Jersey compete in races ranging from one hundred to five hundred miles. In a recent contest, seven thousand forty-six birds from nine hundred and six lofts participated.

2nd: In event of extreme emergency about how many pigeons would our country be able to place in immediate service?

1st: Well, it's reported that England is using twenty thousand birds at the present time. But United States Army officers estimate that our country, because of the cooperation of private fanciers I mentioned just now, could immediately obtain fifty thousand winged soldiers to carry important dispatches from the front battle lines to commanding officers in headquarters' staffs.

2nd: That's swell!

1st: Yes, sir! The Defense Program is expanding with the swiftness of a bird in flight. And the WPA was helping over two years ago!

2nd: Oh, by the way, _____, here's a bit of news about one of our WPA farms in New Jersey. Would you like to hear it?

1st: Would I! I'm always interested in the magnificent job our WPA farms are doing. Without their produce a fair proportion of our needy people would be in a bad way.

2nd: Well, the farm in Lodi, according to Mayor Michael Cavallo, has been doing a grand job for the needy in that town for some time, now.

1st: That's fine.

2nd: But the Lodi WPA farm has gone a step farther.

1st: Yes?

2nd: Harris K. Cohan, Superintendent of the Hasbrouck Heights Hospital, in a letter to the Lodi Borough Council and Mayor Cavallo, says that the large quantities of fresh vegetables the Lodi farm sends his institution is partly responsible for the speedy recovery of some patients at the hospital.

1st: Well. That IS a step forward in the great humanitarian advance the WPA is making. Do we have time to give three cheers for the farm at Lodi?

2nd: The farm rates three cheers all right, but that's just one phase of WPA routine. If you don't mind, I'd like to tell you an amusing little incident I ran across while reading the manuscript of the new book our Writers' Project *has just completed* ⁷¹ ~~is about to send to press.~~

1st: How is it you get all the breaks, fellow? Where was that manuscript when I visited the offices of the Writers' Project recently?

2nd: Well, very probably I was reading it. But hold your horses. Both Administrator Allan and Mrs. Viola Hutchinson, State Supervisor of the Writers' Project, say that this sixty-nine thousand word history of Metuchen will soon be made available to the public.

1st: I'd still like to have a look at that manuscript!

2nd: Well, if somebody does grant you that privilege, read the bit about how Metuchen won the title of "The Brainy Borough" in a contest with Glen Ridge. That battle, my friend, stopped just this side of a declaration of war.

1st: And what caused that unusual competition?

2nd: According to WPA historians on our Writers' Project, the *early 1890's*
~~year 1900~~ marks the period in which artist, writers, and
other personages began to settle in Metuchen.

1st: Yes? But what about it?

2nd: Well, just this: By 1914 the metropolitan press was
referring to Metuchen as "The Brainy Borough", implying
that its citizens held a monopoly on gray-matter.

1st: Ah! I see! And who disputed this claim to bigger and
better brains? I rather imagine somebody would demand a
recount in terms of convolutions.

2nd: I beg your pardon?

1st: I can see you aren't from Metuchen. So go on with the
story.

2nd: No, I'm from... Aw, skip it! Yes, _____, somebody did
demand a recount of the irregular ridges upon the surface
of the brain...convolutions, to you!...which Metuchen
claimed its citizens had plenty of. And the fuse was
fixed to a powder keg.

- 1st: Came the Revolution!
- 2nd: With a bang! Our Writers' Project had discovered that Charles R. Blunt of the Bloomfield Independent Press claimed that Glen Ridge had a better right to the title of "The Brainy Borough" than had Metuchen.
- 1st: I'll bet the pages of Mr. Blunt's paper fairly sizzled with indignation!
- 2nd: Yes, indeed they did! Mr. Blunt's Bloomfield Independent Press challenged the Metuchen Recorder to a contest in which each paper would publish the name and attainments of one of its noted citizens each week.
- 1st: And how was this "local-boy-makes-good" contest to be decided?
- 2nd: Well, the winner would be that paper which could keep the list of celebrities running the longest.
- 1st: I suppose the Metuchen Recorder accepted the challenge?
- 2nd: It did. And the fight was on.
- 1st: Who won?

- 2nd: The Metuchen Recorder, after more than a year of keen competition, and with a most imposing list of noted citizens, too.
- 1st: So Metuchen proved its claim to the title of "The Brainy Borough?"
- 2nd: Yes, by printing the names and attainments, according to our Writers' Project, of persons such as these: Henry M. Alden, editor of Harper's Magazine and a descendant of.... guess who?
- 1st: Not John Alden who was advised to speak for himself?
- 2nd: The same. Then there was Charles Volkmar, ceramic artist, F. Marmaduke Potter, principal of Voorhees College in Vellore, India. Gustave Lindenthal, engineer and bridge builder.
- 1st: I should say Metuchen was doing quite all right as a brain colony!

- 2nd: The list of brainy citizens certainly speaks for itself. It also included Walter Williams, director of the F.W. Woolworth Co.; S. S. Carvalho, Hearst general manager, and Mary E. Wilkins Freeman, novelist, besides many more.
- 1st: Tell me, _____, do you happen to know how Metuchen got its name?
- 2nd: Metuchen was first settled in 1669 as an off-shoot of Woodbridge, so our Writers' Project says.
- 1st: If it was settled that far back, it certainly had plenty of time to collect that list of celebrities the Recorder published.
- 2nd: Well, there are several versions of how "The Brainy Borough" got its real and more conventional name. But project researchers appear to favor the story that it was named for a local Indian chief called Matoekshoning or Matouchin.
- 1st: I see. You know, that Writers' Project of ours is doing a splendid job, writing the histories of towns and cities in New Jersey.

- 2nd: You bet! I'd like to contribute this item also on
National Defense: Our Historical Records Survey Project
is making an exhaustive check of every birth, death,
marriage and divorce which has occurred in New Jersey.
- 1st: Since there are five hundred sixty seven municipalities
and twenty-one counties in this State, that sounds like a
very big job.
- 2nd: It is. And it'll have to be completed by November 15th,
too!
- 1st: How many workers are involved?
- 2nd: Three hundred and fifty field workers from the Historical
Records Survey Project. They will have to search every
bureau of vital statistics in the State for records of
births, marriages and deaths. Court records will also be
searched, especially for divorces.
- 1st: Did you say this work is in the interest of the Defense
Program?

2nd: I did. And according to Robert W. Allan, the vital statistics division of the Federal Census Bureau has a need for these figures, too. Members of the Historical Records Survey Project tell me they see many a long night of hard work ahead of them. But they intend to complete their job according to the time allotted.

1st: Well, if past performances are any indication of what they'll do, I know the Historical Records Survey Project will be ready to take a bow.....when is it? November 15th?

2nd: Right!

1st: Here's another item on national defense. And a very important one, too.

2nd: What is that?

1st: We've spoken before about the WPA's aviation training base at Sky Harbor in Carlstadt, if you remember.

2nd: Yes, I remember. It was a very interesting story.

1st: Right! We told then that the school's capacity was four hundred students, and related how successful the course was and how most of the graduates had secured employment.

2nd: If I recall correctly there are some women in the class at that time. Does that still hold true?

1st: Yes, in the present class of four hundred there are forty women, all enthusiastic, and according to Chief Instructor Lieutenant Harold J. Lentz, very conscientious students.

2nd: Well, tell me more about the plans for expansion.

1st: Okay. Here goes: you know that present quarters is in the old Carlstadt Boat Club building, in Paterson Plank Road at the Hackensack River.

2nd: Yes, I recall that.

1st: Well, a new portable hangar is being constructed next to that building which will double the school's capacity. The new structure's foundations will rest on the roadway and obviate vibrations which have proved a menace to tests conducted in the old building. Everyone realizes, I think, that measurements in aircraft engines must be precise and even a slight vibration can be a drawback.

2nd: Yes, that's very true.

1st: Sixteen engines will be set up in the new hangar. Twelve have been promised by the Navy Department and two each by the Wright Aeronautical Corporation and Pratt-Whitney.

2nd: That sounds very encouraging to me.

1st: It is encouraging. It'll be a swell boost for national defense. To get on, the students, during the course, will tear down the motors, overhaul and rebuild from blueprints. Precision instruments will be used to measure wear.

2nd: I guess that's the type of experience needed these days.

1st: You're right again. Incidentally, Administrator Allan tells me that since the beginning of August, more than 1,000 applications for enrollment in the course have been received.

2nd: Sounds as if the public is defense-conscious, all right.

1st: There is no question about that. Well, the course lasts twelve weeks. It's an intensive one and includes training in engine theory, blueprint and precision instrument reading, practical engine work and aircraft radio. Instruction is also given in civil air regulations, navigation and meteorology.

2nd: WPA might very well be proud of that course.

1st: WPA is not boastful, _____. It just does the very best it knows how in the interests of the nation. You know we have other classes in welding, machinshop and allied trades which also are training men for jobs in defense industries.

2nd: By the way, will that new hangar be ready for the new classes that start on September 30th?

1st: Yes sir, everything will have been finished and the building ready for occupancy by eight hundred trainees.

2nd: Good for WP A. That's swell.

CLOSING ANNOUNCEMENT:

You have just heard "WPA HEADLINES OF THE WEEK",
another in the series of weekly broadcasts devoted to
the work being done by WPA in YOUR community. This
Federal agency is anxious for you to know just what
this work is and now it affects you and your community.
To that end it presents this resume of work in progress.

Your commentators today were _____
and _____.

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